

# Child & Adolescent Needs & Strengths (CANS)

## A Brief Introduction:

The CANS is a part of our assessment process that is aimed at clarifying your story, allowing for easier communication and providing us with a transparent way to talk about what's going well and what you'd like to be better. The CANS is made up of domain (topics) and items (questions). Each item is scored from 0 (great!) to 3 (crisis, critical needs)

## Benefits of using the CANS:

It **HELPS TO INFORM GOALS AND PLANS FOR TREATMENT**. It guides us in making decisions about what to focus on in treatment, where to start, or how to prioritize treatment.

It can be used to **TRACK PROGRESS** over time. Since the CANS is repeatedly scored while a child is in treatment, we have a way of seeing how his or her needs and strengths change over time. A way of seeing how and if the treatment is working!

The CANS keeps things **TRANSPARENT!** The CANS is purposefully direct and clear. It has simple scoring so that all important people in the child's life can review and use this measure it as a way to communicate about the child's case.

It is **COMPREHENSIVE!** It includes items about a range of your needs and also asks about the strengths you have, which makes it pretty unique.

It **INTEGRATES A LOT OF INFORMATION**. It helps us put all of the information we have in one place. This way a lot of information can be considered, and shared (with other professionals or family members) quickly.

## CANS Scores – Level of Needs and Strengths

**0** = always stands for the best possible functioning in an area; either it means there is no "need" or problem in a particular area. A zero can also represent a significant area of strength for a child.

**1** = a score of 1 indicates an area that might require a little attention. It represents an area of need that we want to keep our eye on or we may want to take some preventive action based on anticipated need.

**2 and 3** = Scores of 2 and 3 always need attention of some type, as both indicate a significant need or a lack of strength in a particular area. Items scored 2 and 3 should be related to or directly reflected in the goals for a child's treatment. A score of 3 indicates a need for intensive and/or immediate attention. These are also strengths that can be developed and where goals can be set.

*\*\*Developed in collaboration with the Northwestern – NCTSN Center for Child Trauma Assessment and Service Planning\*\**